(b) if so, what are the details of articles such as gold, cash and other incriminating documents seized during the raids;

(c) whether Government have since taken any action against Mr. Mani Chhabria in this regard and if so, what are the details thereof; and

(d) what are the names of the companies in which Chhabria group are the leading shareholders?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Officers of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence searched the business and residential premises of Shri M.R. Chhabria and those of the Directors of two companies controlled by Shri M.R. Chhabria namely M/s Orson and M/s Nihon of Bombay in January, 1990. During the course of the searches, nothing incriminating was found from the residential premises of the Chairman and Directors of the above companies. However, some incriminating documents were seized from the office as well as factory premises of M/s Orson and M/s Nihon. Further investigations are still in progress.

(d) The information is being collected from the concerned Ministry and will be laid on the table of the House.

Directive to Commercial Banks for clearing local Cheques

339. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many commercial banks in the country are flouting the directives of the RBI in clearing cheques etc.

(b) whether the customer services in banks have become very poor; and

(c) if so, what steps Government have taken to improve the customer services in banks and see that the directives of the RBI are not flouted by banks ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): (a) to (c) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have reported that they have not issued any statutory directive to public sector banks for clearing local cheques. However, they have advised the banks which are members of the clearing houses (particularly those at Bombay, Madras, New Delhi and Calcutta) to ensure that all local cheques deposited by their customers for collection are sent for clearing on the same day. Banks are mostly complying with these instructions.

As regards customer service in banks in general is concerned, various steps have been taken by banks to improve the service rendered by them to their customers. These steps include *inter alia* evolution of time norms for rendering common services, speedier clearance and collection of cheques through computerisation of clearing houses and increased use of courier service, extending to individuals the facility of immediate credit of outstation cheques upto Rs. 2500/-, payment of interest at savings bank rate for delayed collection of outstation cheques beyond 10/14 days, etc.

Steps to maintain Country's Foreign Exchange Reserves

340. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the

Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country's foreign exchange reserves dropped to the tune of Rs. 1036.22 crores by the end of December 1989;

(b) if so, whether Government have taken any steps during the last three months to maintain its foreign exchange reserves; and

(c) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): (a) India's foreign exchange reserves (excluding gold, Special Drawing Rights and working balances held by the Government) which stood at Rs. 6604.63 crores as on 1-4-89 decreased by Rs. 1327.33 crores to Rs. 5277.30 crores on 31-12-89.

(b) and (c) Steps have been taken to maintain the foreign exchange reserves position by initiating a number of measures to promote exports and curtail in essential imports. Attempts are being made to augment foreign exchange earnings through invisible earnings and capital inflows, including external assistance disbursements.

Payment of DA to the Central Government Employees

341. SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR :

SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the wholesale price index for all commodities has climbed upward during the last six months;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard;

(c) whether it is also a fact that with the increase in price-index the dearness allowances to the Central Government employees has become due with effect from 1st January, 1990; and

(d) if so, by when Government propose to announce the D.A. to the Central Government employees ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE) : (a) and (b) The movement of Wholesale Price Index (1981-82=100) for the period July-Dec. 1989 was as under :—

Month ending	W.P.I. (1981-82 =100)
July, 1989	164·5
August, 1989	167·1
September, 1989 . . .	167·9
October, 1989 . . .	167·9
November, 1989 . . .	167·3
December, 1989 . . .	166·4

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Orders in this regard will be issued shortly.

Foreign Exchange released for import of books

342. SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what was the amount of foreign exchange released for the import of books during the last year ;

(b) whether it has come to the notice of Government that certain